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Community Learning Groups: a Method in Adult Literacy for Community Participation and Learning

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COMMUNITY LEARNING GROUPS:
A METHOD IN ADULT LITERACY FOR COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION AND LEARNING

A theses Project

by

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ABSTRACT

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Community Learning Groups: A method in adult literacy education for community participation and learning.

The study was done in the context of the Namibia National Literacy Program and was influenced by my working environment. While studying adult education, and by being exposed to a variety of philosophical views and ideas, I tried to reflect those views and ideas to the adult learner groups who graduated from the Namibia National Literacy Program as well as to those in the communities not attending any classes. The questions I had in my mind were the following: What can they do together to learn? How can they utilize their new skills to get involved in participatory community development. The study explores the community groups and how to utilize them as a method of adult literacy education for educational purposes and community participation.

This document addressed the following; 1) Background information and purpose of study; 2) literature review section of previous work done on the topic and how it relates to the current study; 3) the research procedure and the methodology used in the field to gather the data; 4) case studies on the formal and informal group learning involved in the study; 5) understandings and implications of findings on Community Learning Groups; and 6) recommendations based on those findings.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate the project to my family, especially my two sons, Mitere and Koreni, whom I neglected for the sake of the project.

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Special thanks to the groups, group leaders and the individual members involved in the research for their outstanding participation and cooperation during the process.

I hope the content of this document will serve as a starting point for revisiting the concept of Community Learning Group and redefining the role of group learning. I also hope that the document will also provide encouragement that might enable people in the different communities to learn together and to manage their own lives and environment.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Participant Groups Triangle.

Figure 2. Two Main Themes From the Study.

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LIST OF WORDS

- Mahangu = A traditional corn use for many purposes. It is pound to get maize meal for porridge, soft drink, and bread as well as for making alcohol.
- Nonzimbu & Matemo = these are traditional instruments use for cutting bushes and grass for clearing up farming lands.
- G.E.D = An abbreviation for General Education Diploma that is equivalent to the Senior Education Certificate in Namibia.
- CLG = Community Learning Group
- NLPN = National Literacy Program in Namibia

CHAPTER 1

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1. Introduction

The study was conducted in Rundu¹, Kavango region, one of the seven educational regions in Namibia. The region is situated in the Northern Part of the country. Kavango has a population of 68 730, as taken from the 1991 census statistics; The region is the third with regard to population in Namibia, as well as with regard to the highest illiteracy rate. During the colonial era, this region was also one among those that suffered in war as a battle field. In addition to that, it was also one among those that suffered economic and support negligence during the colonial government which resulted into its under development.

Namibia shares borders with the following countries: In the Northern part with Angola and Zambia, in the Eastern part with Botswana and Zimbabwe, and in the Southern part with South Africa. In the Western part is the beautiful skeleton Coast.

Namibia, like many other countries, strongly supports adult literacy education. The government document entitled, "The First National Development Plan (NDPI), 1995-2000" clearly describes the roots of Namibia's current educational and cultural policies:

¹Appendix E attached to shows where the study was conducted

Methods are being explored to try to address the affect of illiteracy, helping people to learn, and helping the members of the community in their development. One of the efforts which is still in the pipeline is the idea of the establishment of Community Learning and Development Centres to improve lifelong learning and support local development activities. This will be done in collaboration with other Ministries, NGOs, and, of course, the communities themselves. A circular and questionnaire have been sent to individuals and organizations by the Secretary of Adult Basic Education. A circular explained the concept, benefit, and process of the methods being explored.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Literacy for today is based on the social view, which is the belief in using the daily practices of the communities as a starting point for learning. Because the issue is not literacy, but what to do with literacy, future literacy programs and activities should be based on the context of a particular community and its social activities.

Literacy participants who are graduates from the basic stages of the NLPN are still wondering where to go and what to do. Despite their questions and desire for future literacy learning, in most of their communities the non-use of reading skills is a common phenomenon. Reading materials are either not suitable for or not available to them and there is little to motivate them to continue learning. There are also few occasions when these learned skills from the basic stages can be put into practice. In addition traditional instructional approaches, which have been predominant in our adult basic and adult literacy education, do not promote the practical uses of literacy skills.

The use of Community Learning Groups and interest groups has been advocated as an effective approach for improving the quality of adult basic and literacy education and the continued use of these literacy skills. Studies indicate that support for the group learning approach seems to be growing and expanding. Despite the fact that there is little practical information to guide the implementation of this approach, many countries have been utilizing community group learning as a strategy.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

Having those problems explored above on one hand, and the potential effect that group learning method has on the other, this study explored group learning as a method and what makes it effective. The study examined Community Learning Groups, what are they?, What might they be?, How do they work given a specific goal, certain limits and clear guidance, including the provision of reading materials and the creation of a literate environment? The study also explored how to establish guidelines, how to utilize learning groups as a method for educational purposes, and community participation and community development.

1.4. Philosophy Behind the Study

The philosophy behind the alternative method for group learning used in this study was influenced by many philosophers including: Paulo Freire of Brazil, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, John Dewey, and Ivan Illich. Paulo Freire believed that it is impossible for people to act freely until they have seen the world around them critically. Also his ideas on

participation allowed the “oppressed” to become an active participant in the making of their own history. Julius Nyerere believed in education for self reliance and in the ideas of development of people, for people, by people, and that education should be to liberate people from ignorance and dependence. John Dewey believed that people learn through experience and see education as a continuing construction of experiences. Ivan Illich believed that there is a gap between schooling and society and decried the use of textbooks, emphasizing experiences as the key to learning.

(1994), and Quane (1989) (who examined some of the case studies of local groups and action groups that have been documented in various countries.) Quane also identified how these case studies were used as learning strategies in the post-literacy and continuing education programs.

Edward Lindenman (1885-1953) is considered to be a major philosopher on adult education in the United States. According to him, adult education is “a cooperation-operative venture in non-authoritarian, informal learning - the chief purpose of which is to discover the meaning of experience” (as cited in Brookfield, 1987, p.122). He advocated the use of adult learning groups, believing that “adult education must be confined to small groups and that lectures and mass teaching...(should be) automatically eliminated.”

Lindenman believed that adult education was a force for constructive social action. He believed that the curriculum should focus on method instead of content. Lindenman, like Dewey, decried the use of textbooks. He believe:

Experience is the adults textbook" and thus using the discussion method as the means for relying on, and sharing the learners' knowledge. Realizing the importance of group interactions, adult education programs that have traditionally practiced one to one tutoring are moving towards small group instruction. Community-based programs, rejecting traditional curriculum, are using the learners' experiences to write new learner-centered lessons and curriculum. Instructors are learning to facilitate learning groups, moving away from teacher-centered to learner-centered approach.. (Nixon-Ponder, 1995, P.7)

2.2. Community Learning Groups in relation to other learning groups.

When we talk about community leaning groups, we are talking of groups like study circles (Blid, 1989), study groups (Makibbin, & Spraque, 1991), women's groups, support groups, interest groups, cultural groups, as well as theater and drama groups. Study Circles, like other community learning groups, are seen as an integral part of a democratization process to provide citizens with knowledge and skills for active involvement in societal issues, and to strengthen and develop individuals working together for a better society. With Study Circles, different studies can be incorporated into one study Circle (Blid, 1989, p.23). Study groups are mostly described in literature for educators, administrators and professionals. They are defined as “educators studying their craft of knowledge together.” But community learning groups can also develop their own Study Groups at the grassroots level in order to generate grassroots theory and knowledge.

Community learning groups could also result in projects and other financial gain activities. Members can be involved in learning that could result in a project. Some groups need skills for survival while others need skills for acquiring the knowledge to make social action possible.

Learning groups come under different names and forms in different countries. When one looks at the different types of learning groups, one realizes that they look very different. But when their work is more closely analyzed, the differences fade and we discover one thing in common, that is, the learning process.

2.3. What are the Purposes of Learning Groups as Cited from the Literature?

Studies revealed that group learning enables people to learn from their interaction with each other and from their environment, just as in real life. "They assume that everyone has something to share, something worthwhile to contribute, as well as something to learn." (Emel, 1994).

One of the purposes for exploring community learning groups was to be able to utilize them as an educational vehicle. According to Kinsey & Bing, the Ghanaian "cultural groups" that are performing popular culture included traditional dancing, drumming, choral singing, and drama.

Since there are more things taking place in this kind of group, the cultural group is also a social event, where factions, cliques, leadership, struggles, egos, love affairs, and friendship all undergo changes and adjust to constantly shifting societal pressures. (1978, p.114-128)

It is also important to know that community learning groups could support life long learning and they can be groups with varied purposes. If the purpose of the CLG is to enable members of a community to participate in personal and community development, then building confidence and developing skills are necessary. For instance, Sushan, 1995 also explored the possibility of Women's support groups in Nepal. The purpose stated is:

to help women to develop a support system in the community in order to enhance their confidence and skills and to enable them to join the development activities which are suitable for their need (p. 1)

Activities she described are of utmost importance to be adopted and used by other learning groups for reading, writing, and skill building exercises depending on the context.

Axinn et al (1994, p. 14), described the National Council of Kenya and the Rural Reconstruction Movement in the Philippine as enabling rural women to gain confidence, knowledge, and expertise in income-generating cooperative activities beginning with their own analysis of priorities concerns. They further explained that, after these women described the shared needs and available resources, each group selects an income-generating activity, conducts learning sessions to study the chosen activity, plans the project, and, in most cases, successfully implements it.

Developing self-confidence, and skills for income-generating activities are some of the major purposes of many learning groups. Having the self-confidence and necessary skills for surviving are the stepping stone for personal growth and family well being.

Gaining skills and awareness that will enable one to participate in and understand political issues as well as children's education are also some of the purposes for community learning. The "cultural circles" for adults in Guinea-Bissau, for instance, are said to be learning groups in which adults learn literacy and gain political consciousness using the Freirean process of social investigation and analysis. In addition, cultural circle participants have helped to design needs-based curricula for their children in local primary schools, and have supervised in community work projects, an integral part of the children's schooling. (Axinn et al, 1983, p.13.)

2.4. What are the Activities Undertaken by Learning Groups as Found in Various Literature?

Some authors discovered ways and strategies that are useful as activities for group discussions. In addition, groups may use reading, writing, and speaking as part of their activities to increase the participants confidence in those skills. Some group activities may also include, skill building through sharing. By way of illustration, you will probably want to develop activities around skill building. Learning activities that require learners to practice multiple skills are richer because they tend to replicate how skills are being used in "real" life. Then, when developing learning activities for groups, one needs to consider the links between or among various skills (e.g., talking and reading, talking and writing). It is interesting that, by involving the learners in generating materials, most of the other liabilities either disappear or are lessened. The focus shifts from products to a process that is an integral part of learning as it is "discovered" by learners. (Emel, 1994)

One model was developed by a team of practitioners and interns working with Elsa Auerbach in Boston, based on the following principle: "from the community to the community, in which community needs were addressed by community resources." (Auerbach, 1994, p.5-6) The model described the work of the Community Training for Adult and Family Literacy Projects, -A project designed to train literacy instructors from immigrant and refugee communities to teach people in their own communities.

The key features of the model included the following:

Community leadership development--the project trains and develops leaders who come from the community and go back to their communities.

Participatory approach to literacy instruction--adult learners are involved in setting goals, identifying needs, choosing learning activities and evaluating the process.

Participatory approach to instructor--Students work with instructors to identify their goals and needs, shape the direction of the training, and evaluate its usefulness.

The basic philosophy of the model was based on the following beliefs:

The basic beliefs about the learners--drawing out from what learners already know and using their stories and experiences to teach them.

The beliefs about the teacher's role- breaking away from the traditional way of teacher centered approach and moving towards learner-centered approach.

The belief that teaching must take into account the culture's specific ways of using and understanding literacy.

The beliefs that education should enable participants to understand the social nature of problems and to figure out how to address them.

The belief that students learn best when the content is related to their own experiences.

The belief that family literacy and that students' first language should be seen as a resource for literacy and not an obstacle.

The belief that teachers should be from the community and that teacher training should be participatory (pp.5-6).

It is true that literacy education is more than just teaching students how to read and write. Issues described in this model such as job situations, safety, and violence, are necessary to be incorporated into lesson plans. This allows participants space to talk about their concerns, and the problems. These kinds of issues can be easily linked to literacy teaching. Students talk and write about their experiences and fears as well as generating strategies for addressing them. The issues being addressed in this model can be applied to rural communities. The approach to learning fits well with the community group learning within adult literacy.

2.5. What are the Ideal Strategies Used in Learning Groups?

Groups need to be exposed to strategies that brings knowledge:

- to act and change instead of only to know and understand,
- knowledge of development, liberation and creativity instead of passivity and hidden oppression,
- knowledge of social intercourse and collective development instead of competition, isolation and individualization,
- knowledge which is intelligible instead of being a mystification of things and events, and knowledge which demolishes myths and prejudices about inequalities of man instead of legitimating the classification and evaluation of man into different social and material level (Blid, 1989, pp. 24-25)

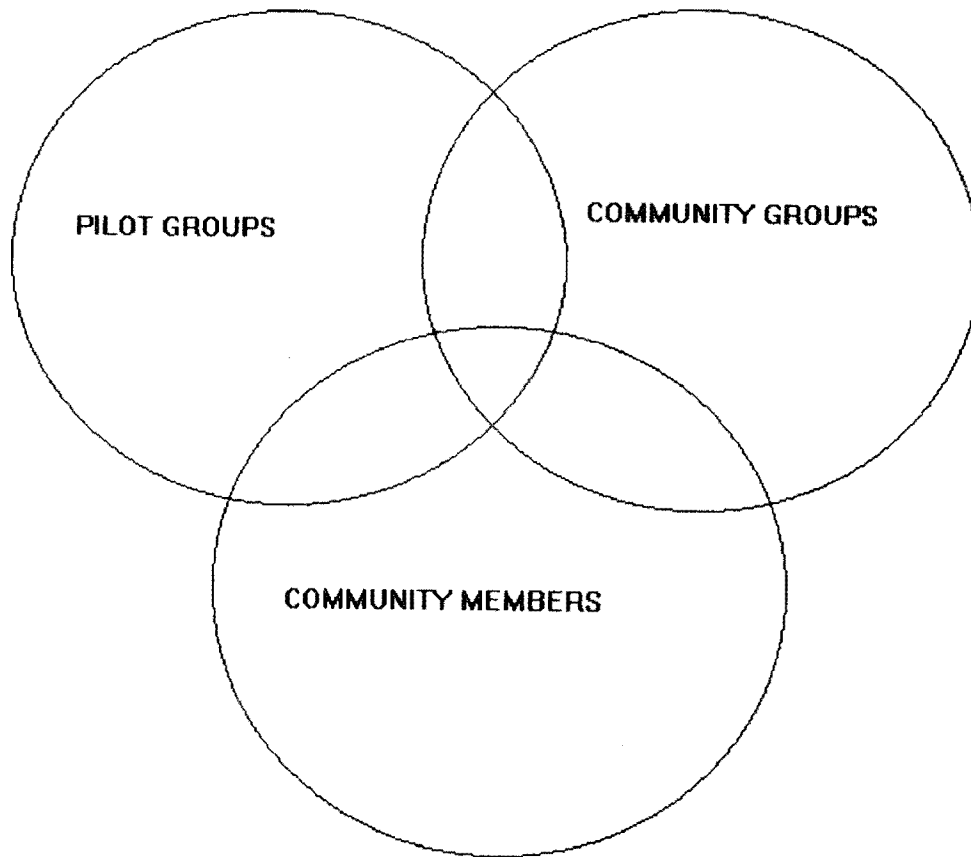
The following principles taken from the same source are also fundamental to group learning:

- The principle of equality and democracy,
- The principle of liberation,
- The principle of cooperation and companionship,
- The principle of freedom and the right to set objectives,
- The principle of continuity and planning,
- The principle of active participation,
- The principle of printed study material,
- The principle of change and action.

The literature in this section uncovered a whole range of useful information that also contributed towards the study. It revealed useful knowledge, strategies and benefits about learning groups in general. (Blid, 1986, pp.24-25)

CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH PROCEDURE AND CASE STUDIES



3.1. Figure 1. Participant Groups

Prior to the research an independent study was done in group learning. I explored a learning group in the vicinity of Massachusetts. The group was working on health issues at one Adult Education Center outside the university. Information from this group was collected through observations, group discussions, and interviews with participants and the facilitator. The outcome of this independent study contributed to the overall study by

providing the background knowledge about learning groups. The group also served as the basis for an action plan for the study in Namibia.

3.2. Two Pilot Groups

In Namibia two pilot groups were created in one of the Regions. I met the with the groups once a week, two hours a day for ten weeks. Each group met on separate days, and worked on different topics of interest. The two groups went through the same process of:

1. Group formation.
2. Introduction to the purpose of coming together as well as to the participants.
3. Sharing of expectations, and objectives.
4. Listing of the topics of interest and prioritizing.
5. Choosing of one or more topic/s for discussion during the ten meetings.
6. Discussions on the role of a group leader.
7. Planning on how to go about those chosen topic/s.
8. Sharing of group discussions.
9. Sharing individual and group writings .
10. Summarizing of the ten days of discussion.

I initiated the first meeting, and also facilitated the first three meetings, especially the sessions on the introduction sharing of expectations, and objectives. I observed the groups through the next seven meetings. While observing the members interacting with one another in groups, there were opportunities to also talk to individual about the activities; later I conducted a focus group interview with the pilot groups about the process and group learning in general.

Towards the end of the ten meetings, all discussions were compiled into one booklet for both groups. I compiled the information by simply summarizing individual and group activities. I felt that it was important to give feedback to the participants by giving them a copy of the booklet containing all the information on the discussions and views discussed through the ten meetings. Participants could use this booklet for themselves to read with their children and family members, or to share with friends. They may also try to apply some of the issues and plans discussed in the booklet to other learning activities.

These two pilot groups were created in order to observe the process of group member selection, the planning and the process of group activities, and the impact of the group activities prior to when they started. In addition, I created a conducive physical learning environment by arranging the chairs to provide a Nonformal atmosphere and provided printed materials to supplement participants' experiences while working on their activities, such as novels, short stories, and poems.

3.3. Two, already Existing Community Groups.

Apart from the pilot groups, two women's groups from the different communities were observed and interviewed. I visited these groups at their meeting places and attended two meetings of one of the groups and three meetings of the other. Their activities were observed and, later, informal discussions took place with group leaders and senior members of the groups to explore the purposes and objectives of the groups. Permission from the group members was obtained to access documents from one of the groups. Later, interviews were conducted about the activities, problems, experiences, and benefits in the groups. An in-depth interview was conducted with the chairpersons of these specific groups as well as two other members from each of the groups.

3.4. Members of the Community

Apart from the two pilot groups, and the two community groups, members of the community, especially those involved in adult literacy, were interviewed. Members from the community development department included one Agricultural extension worker and one community development extension officer; and two representatives from the Non governmental Organization. Also, three other members of the community responded to interview questions. It was helpful to interview individual members of the community. Some of their views brought about issues that the groups themselves might not be able to talk about and that I also might not be able to observe.

Thus, the information from these groups and individual participants was collected through the use of participant observation, informal discussions through question and answers, one on one interviews and focus group interviews.

3.5. Guiding questions

To be able to get the data needed in a systematic way , two different forms of questions were created, one form for the interviews for the groups and other community members, and the other form with questions for observation. Because of the limited time that I had, forms enabled me to connect the activities of the pilot groups and to conduct necessary follow ups. The following were the main questions used in collecting the data:

1. What were the purpose of Community Learning Groups as seen by the participants themselves? and Why?
2. What were the major topics and activities undertaken by the Community Learning Groups?
3. How were the topics selected?
4. What resources and support were available to sustain the Learning Groups?
5. What were the factors that hindered and factors that helped in sustaining the groups?
6. What were the benefits in learning in groups?

3.6. Methodology

3.6.1. Observations

An observation form was created to enable me to collect data about groups as they were interacting with one another during their discussions and group work (see Appendix A). This form enabled me to capture information on how members were socializing and communicating to one another in groups; informal and formal leadership; how tasks were distributed in the groups; cooperation and conflicts in groups that were not expressed by the members. The information also helped me to compare participant behaviors and impact in the beginning and at the end of the activities. The observation sheet was used every day, one for each group at a time.

3.6.2. Informal Discussions Through Questions and Answers.

With the pilot groups, discussions, questions and answers took place during breaks, after meetings, or even during the meetings. In the process of these informal interactions with individual and small groups of participants, I asked some questions to get information needed. The same strategy was used with other groups as well as with other members in the community.

3.6.3. Interviews.

Towards the end of the ten meetings, arrangements were made for the interviews. The interview questions were used in this regard to access information about learning groups in general (see Appendix B). The interview took one and half hour to two hours. The interviews were recorded on tape with the interviewee's permission.

With the pilot groups, the following two questions were first asked: What did participants learn from the process and activities done in the pilot? How were they going to use the information gained from the activities done in the pilot groups?

With the two Community Groups, the questions were asked in relation to what they were doing.

With the community members who were interviewed, questions were structured to find out their views and opinions on Learning Groups . The community members who were interviewed were extension workers and members of the NGOs who were directly involved with the community development activities in these different communities where these groups were situated.

3.7. Participants and the Amount of Data

Forty two participants, 12 males and 30 females, were involved in the research, and they were as follows: 26 participants from the two pilot groups, 4 members interviewed from the two community groups (a) the Kambundu Women's Group and b) the Rundu Women's Club), 5 members from the Health Group in Ware, and 7 other members from the community were also interviewed. At the end of the research, the researcher had 14 interview transcripts: two from the focus group interview of 2 hours with the two pilot groups; one from the focus group interview of 1 hour with the Health group; and 11 from the 11 one-to-one interviews of 1 hour with individual members of the community groups and other members of the community.(see Table 1)

3.8. Table 1. Numbers and Genders of Interview Groups

	Male	Female	Total
Health Group	0	5	5
Vungu Vungu Pilot Group	2	15	17
Katji na Katji Pilot Group	5	2	7
Kambundu Women's Group	0	3	3
Rundu Women's Club	0	3	3
Community Members	5	2	7
Total	12	30	42

CHAPTER 4

4. CASE STUDIES ON THE GROUPS THAT WERE INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH

4.1. Case Study One, The Health Group

The Health Group was a group I met at one Adult Education Center in Ware, Massachusetts, US. The group consisted of five members between the ages of 25-45, all of whom were female. Two members had already completed their GED, and the other three members were still working on their GED. Three among them were unemployed. The other two were doing part time jobs. They were all mothers with children. The group started in February, 1995 and I came to join them in March, 1995.

I was able to I observed and participated in the group activities for at least six weeks on each Thursday from 10-12 noon. After three to four Thursdays of observations, participants and instructor were interviewed about the class.

The participants explained that in their first meeting they decided themselves what they wanted to discuss and how they wanted to go about it. They came up with topics concerning health that they wanted to discuss as a group and later made the schedule. The participants designed their own program and schedule with the help from the facilitator. From those members interviewed, they said that they kept on coming together because of the interesting topics that they were busy dealing with everyday, Especially the issues concerning women.

For instance, the discussions that they had sometimes on Breast Cancer, AIDS, family planning, etc., interested them and they wanted to hear more about these issues they said:

....., since it is not a structured class,....., we talk about the topics that we wanted to discuss, those help people to come to the class. It is not like a regular school or high school where you have to learn this, this and this. And here is, we talk about what we want to talk about, at the length we want to talk about it, and which keeps us motivated and interested in that subject to keep on coming back.

Another participant added:

It is not just academic stuff. A lot of it too is the worries, and the fears, and things outside, which this particular class is actually dealing with, not just here but at home.

Participants explored topics like AIDS, family planning, Breast Cancer, smoking, self-defense, stress management, and how to grow herbal medicine. The discussions, and sharing, reading, writing took place on those topics, as well as practicing of some of those skills learned. For instance, the topic on herbal medicine included activities such as reading books, writing information from books, sharing information on herbal medicine from books read, as well as from participants' experiences, later followed by the practical growing of the herbal medicine by the participants themselves.

The topics on AIDS and family planning included presentations from guest speakers, writing notes by the participants, and taking pictures. Later the participants had to put together all the things they had done throughout their meetings and they produced a resource book on the outcome of the activities. At one time, the participants created a very beautiful poster. The poster was created out of all kinds of family planning materials which were brought in by one presenter from the family planning section.

When they were asked about the benefits from the learning group, one responded:

Some people are not very much comfortable to start talking about issues affecting their daily lives outside the group. In the group, you hear about things and issues that you cannot ask from other people outside the class.

One participant said: “one picks up certain things in the class and keeps it.”

Participants said that they were more aware of the way they fed their children, spice their food, and the way they thought about certain things than before. The activities in the group were informative and useful to their daily lives. They said that the class was a source of information, a place where they had access to knowledge. The participants expressed their satisfaction with their achievements and they were also able to highlight some of their accomplishments and benefits to their daily lives as follows:

I mean I should have worked out of here with something I have ever tried. I would never have tried to grow my own herb. I would never have tried to do Yoga, stress management on my own.

While working on health issues, they also used literacy as a way to learn.

Participants were encouraged to take notes and to write letters of invitation and appreciation to those who came to visit them. Participants were also encouraged to take part in discussions as well as reading passages from the texts. Thus one of the advantages, literacy, was integrated into health issues.

There were not many factors hindering the progress of the group, except the following: Transportation, enough funds, and absenteeism of some members. One participant expressed that they were few because some members were not much committed. Participants also mentioned that since the topics were optional, some members sometimes felt like not participating in some of the suggested activities.

4.2. Case Study Two, Vungu Vungu Pilot Group

This group was created for research purposes at one of the villages located 15km east of the main town of Rundu, one of the seven educational Regions in Namibia. The group consisted of 17 participants all from the stage three basic English literacy class, two males and 15 females. Some of the participants worked in the garden, some in their own fields, others worked in village shops, while some were just taking care of their children at home. Their ages ranged from 25 to 55.

The first meeting was a general meeting attended by all interested community members. After explaining the purpose of the meeting as well as the purpose of creating the group, interested members were requested to sign their names. The selection took place differently. One member of the literacy class was chosen from the group and his task was to select 17 participants who would be participating in the pilot group. Members were selected according to capabilities and commitments. This illustrates the kind of top down structure that sometimes exists in the villages. After the meeting, the nominees remained behind to select a venue for the next ten meetings. They also chose the day and time for the meetings. The meetings took place at the Catholic Church building on every Wednesday for two hours, from 9am to 11am.

During the first meeting of the pilot group, after the introductory session, the group members listed topics of interest. After discussions on those chosen topics, they prioritized and chose one or two topics for discussion for the next ten meetings.

Topics and issues selected by the group were as follow:

- Alcohol abuse
- Why literacy?, past, present and future
- Traditional and cultural activities and education
- Teenage pregnancy
- Community projects
- Health issues
- The following three topics were the chosen topics for the ten meetings:
- Why literacy?, past, present and future
- The traditional and cultural activities

The group discussed, Why literacy?, the past, present and future of the National Literacy Program, the program they were involved in. The discussions were about what literacy did to them and what they want to see happening in the program in the future. Their second topic, which was also divided into two parts, was about historical issues: how traditional chiefs were respected, and also alcohol abuse by women. Thus, the purpose was to share some traditional history, as well as their experiences and thoughts about the literacy program.

4.3. Case Study Three, Katjie na Katjie Pilot Group

This group was also created for the research process at one of the rural village 95km south of the main town. The group consisted of 15 members, four females and 11 males, ages ranging from 25-35. All members in the group left formal school without completing grade 10. They were all unemployed and all literate in the mother tongue. We

met at the Adult education center not utilized by the community but used as a class for the literacy program. We met on each Saturday from 10am to noon.

Unlike the Vungu Vungu pilot group, the selection of members for the pilot group in the first general meeting was completed in a different way. Interested members signed their names on a piece of paper. After the meeting, those who signed up remained behind to set up the time and day for the ten meetings as well as the venue. During the first pilot group meeting, after the introductory session, members selected topics for discussions for the ten meetings. In the same way as for Vungu Vungu group, after discussions on those chosen topics, they prioritized, and then chose one for discussion for the next ten meetings.

Topics and issues chosen by the group were as followed:

1. Community water pumps. The use and care of water pumps.
2. How to make use of local resources for building local toilets.
3. Traditional and cultural issues that were disappearing in the community.
4. How to start projects from community initiatives for self-employment.
5. How to deal with alcohol abuse.

After listing and prioritizing the kinds of projects to be undertaken, how to start projects, came up as the most favored topic for discussion. In dealing with the topic of how to start a project the group did a strategic planing, and the following were the headings discussed for the ten meetings:

1. What problem do we have? What kind of project do we want? Why such project?

2. What process are we going to follow?, for instances,:
3. * What kind of resources do we have to start with?
4. * What kind of resources and support do we need?
5. * What advantages are there in undertaking such a project?
6. * What problems are we going to experience before, during and after the project?
7. Who are the people to be involved in the project?
8. Where are we going to get a suitable place for the project?
9. What is the suitable day, and time for the meetings?

The group decided to share and research knowledge and information on project planning to enable them to create an income generating project. The activities in both pilot groups included the following:

- Self-introduction of each member.
- Sharing of expectations.
- Sharing of objectives and the explanation of the concepts, Community Learning group.
- Choosing of a group leader and the discussion of the role of a group leader.
- Strategic planning for the chosen topic.
- Discussions, sharing, reading, and writing.

There were discussions in both two groups, first about the topic and then later sharing and writing about the topic. Sometimes the members went to do inquiries from the

community members and returned to report on the findings in the next meeting. Mainly it was discussions, sharing and, group and individual writing.

After the ten meetings, changes were observed in participants' attitudes and behavior. Group members also expressed perceived changes and benefits during discussion and interviews. For instance, after the groups had undergone a strategic planning process, as well as discussions about the role of the group leader, the group leaders were able to do different tasks differently than in the beginning. For instance, in the beginning, the chairing was a problem for every one. Everybody refused to be a chairperson. Those who were able to chair the group did not know where to start. Sometimes they just kept quiet, or they just asked me to continue chairing for them. Later, when the groups were introduced to the role of the group leader, group leaders were able to chair their groups; they gave every one a chance to speak; they ensured participation by all. The chairpersons were able to lead discussions in an even better way. The group members also started talking more than before.

During the interviews, at the end of the ten meetings, I observed that the members were very much affected by the process and the activities. Discussion took longer than at the beginning. Most answers to questions about the importance of community group learning came about as a result of group activities. For instance, when the groups were asked what factors hinder community learning groups, most responded that it is important to have a plan for the elimination of future problems. They also said that it was important to have good leadership. The members in both groups were very much proud and motivated to be in the pilot groups.

4.4. Table 2. Summary of the Two Pilot groups.

	Vungu Vungu Pilot Group	Katji na Katji Pilot Group
About the Group	Seventeen participants age ranging from 25-55 Working environment: garden, village shops, agriculture.	Seven participants age ranging from 25-35. All unemployed.
Topics, Activities and Process	Literacy, and Traditional issues. Listing and prioritizing, planning, discussions, reading, writing and sharing	How to start an income generating project Activities involved planning, discussions, reading, writing and sharing
Resources and Support	Conducive learning environment, reading materials, leadership, resources and support.	Community Center, conducive learning environment, reading materials, leadership, resources and support
Problems and Constraints	Lack of printed materials, group learning skills, and self-confidence.	Lack of basic equipment's, resource people, and group learning skills
Benefits	One learn much from others experiences	Learning groups became a source of information through sharing.

4.5. Case Study four, Kambundu Women's Group

The Kambundu Women's Group was a well-established group of women who came together to learn and educate one another about community issues and to share problems. One of their main purposes was to promote Christianity among the women, who in turn would educate their families. The group consisted of 30 members, all female, between the ages of 25 and 60. Members were from the same community, but they had also branches throughout the region. Most of the members were mothers with children. Their working condition varied from housewife, teachers, nurses, to government officers, but there were some who were unemployed. Their level of literacy varied from grade 10-12. Few have tertiary education. There were also members who were non-literate. They always met once a week at the Church, but in some cases they meet in different communities with other branch members.

Topics and activities undertaken by the group were about those issues they perceived as damaging the core of family life, for instance, alcohol abuse. These kinds of messages on alcohol abuse were sometimes demonstrated through the use of dramas and plays. They demonstrate how children and other members of the family as well as the neighbors used to suffer when one of the parents was an alcoholic.

Child raising was also one of the topics undertaken by the group. The discussions on this topic were presented in comparisons. They always compared the traditional and the modern ways of child raising, how parents took care of their children many years ago, in the traditional way, and how modern parents are taking care of their children nowadays.

Other topics for discussions were the following: “Women and God’s Word, how can women serve God and be exemplary to the family, how marriages were causing anger, frustrations and fighting among the family members and other people.” Members expressed that they wanted young mothers to learn from elderly mothers while elderly mothers could learn from the young mothers. For instance one said:

in our meetings and discussions we always benefit much especially those of us who do not have grandparents to teach us such rare information. We are being upgraded on how to solve problems in many ways.

Most of their activities included discussions of those issues, sharing, and listening. The group also performed traditional songs and dances as well as dramas and plays for different messages.

The group used local resources when performing traditional dramas and dances; but they also needed transport and funds to be able to maintain the group. Basically, the members have to rely on membership contribution.

The group members reported about transport and communication problems. Transport for transporting members to the meetings and to use for the organizational and maintenance purposes. The communication problem was about the gap between the leaders and the members of the group. Fueled by jealousy about the leaders because they were doing well and might be selected as future leaders.

But on the other hand, as a church group members were always very much committed. When it came to topics like cooking and home management, women became serious in taking notes, especially those who knew how to read and write, said one group leader.

One member of the group also expressed that group learning helps to build people in many ways. People shared family problems and brought peace in families as well as in the community. For instance:

our women's group brought a lot of changes among the members. Many families that were in crisis, couples that wanted to separate, and alcohol abusers who used to insult each other, improved. Group learning help people to improve on the way they act and communicate to others. It help people to realize some of their wrong behaviors and start to change for good.

4.6. Case Study five, Rundu Women's Club

The Rundu Women's Club was also a well established Women's Group, consisted of about 40 members, but the number was decreasing, one woman explained. Most members were mothers with children, and ages ranged from 30 to 50. Their working conditions varied from housewives to teachers, secretaries in offices, nurses, and some were self-employed. The level of literacy was around grade 12. Some had tertiary education.

Members came from different ethnic groups from the same community. For instance, one member explained that "when the Group started in the 70s, it was meant for women to keep themselves busy. They felt that they needed a place to come together to socialize and to learn and they met at least once a month. " They met at different, carefully planned venues, depending on the topic for discussion or activity for that specific meeting.

The women came together to move away from their busy days and family responsibilities and listen to interesting topics presented by other members of the group. The main objectives of the group, as expressed by the members, were 1) to keep women up to date with the current issues, 2) to give each other basic skills and knowledge, and 3) to learn new information and skills each month from other women.

One of the women said that

We also invite presenters to come and share ideas and other learning activities with us. For instance, when we presented a Christmas evening, there were speakers representing other countries, for example, one represented America, one Holland, one Germany etc. They shared with us on how Christmas is being celebrated in those countries and it was fun.

Other topics and activities include the following:

Entertainment's--women having fun, children party for adults, fashion parade, how to make earrings, how to repair old shoes and clothes to make them look new, how to prepare food and the use of kitchen equipment, how to do paintings and frames, how to use cosmetics, how to celebrate Christmas Day, how to fold papers for flowers, as well as other competitions. Presenters, if not the group members, were invited to come and present their topics to the members.

Some of the constraints were the following: Poor attendance of members and invited community members to meetings. One member complained:

You spend your time preparing all the necessary things to be used during the meeting, and you invite almost 80 women but only 20 or so turn up. People seem to lose interest. We do not know whether this is caused by the hot weather, financial problems, lack of interests, or just laziness.

The delay in the delivery of ordered items was also one of the problems encountered by this group. Such delay sometimes caused inconvenience, they said. The differences in languages, ethnic, and different interests were some of problems they experienced in the group. Since membership was open to all ethnic groups, and most of the members were spoke different languages, translation was one of the problems in some cases. To be able to meet the different interests among the members was also a constraint.

Despite the constraints, members expressed that, in this group, one learns different things, including different culture, and also how to communicate well with others. For instance, some of them were very shy. One women said:

After joining the group, I came to be more talkative and active than ever. I love the group very much and I would like it to continue. I learned a lot and I even taught some of the skills learned to some of my family and friends at home. I want others also to come and join so that they can learn more. If I know something, I can share with others; if I don't I can invite someone who knows to come and demonstrate and share with the group.

Some members interviewed felt that learning in a group was important, because groups were places where people came together to learn and discuss, a place where you can easily invite experts to come and share views and ideas on important issues. What women acquire from the groups they can easily transfer to friends or family members. The group depended on membership fees. One member explained that:

Our main support comes form the registered members. Each member has to pay an annual fee of \$50 Namibian dollar each. Members sometimes contribute on their own during the time of competitions or so. Sometimes we ask for donations when possible.

Resources needed were only kitchen equipment for use by the group during their meetings.

The equipment were bought with the group membership funds.

4.7. Table 3. Summary of the Three Community Learning Groups

	Kambundu Women's Group	Rundu Women's Club	Ware Health Group
Aims and Objectives	To learn and educate one another about community issues. To share community problems. To promote Christianity among women.	To socialize and to update one another on current issues. To share skills and information	To explore Health related issues. To exercise and apply those skills.
Membership	Group had 30 members of the same denomination. Age ranging from 15-60	Group consisted of about 20 women, multi-cultural, and from the same community	Group had five members, age ranging from 25-45
Topics	Alcohol abuse, child raising, women and God's Word, marriage and family conflicts.	Topics were based on home and family improvements	How to grow herbal medicine. Smoking, self-defense, AIDS, and family planning.
Activities	Discussions, sharing, songs, dances, drama and plays	Discussions, sharing, demonstrations, socialization.	Discussions, sharing, hands-on activities.
Resources and Support	Transport, funds, venue.	Kitchen facilities, transport, venue, funds.	Transport, baby care taker.
Factors that hindered	Discouragement's, lack of skills, lack of transport.	Poor attendance, poor delivery of goods, translations, different interests, transport expenses.	Absenteeism, lack of transport.
Factors that help	Commitment and spiritual safety.	To learn different things and different cultures.	Group was seen as a sources of information.

SECTION 5

5. UNDERSTANDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

5.1. Five Main Categories were Identified From the Data

5.1.1. The motivation.

What motivated the people to come together as a group, as identified by the members of the groups and other participants, included the following:

- to learn and educate one another about community issues;
- to share basic skills and community problems; to create awareness among youth and adults about immediate social crisis such as AIDS or teenage pregnancy and explore solution or to find ways to solve them;
- to explore health related issues and problems and to exercise and try to apply those activities in their daily life situation; and
- to lay the ground work about knowledge and skills for income-generating activities.

What was common from all the groups was the needs that brought them together; one community member expressed that the purpose of community learning groups could also be one of the following:

- to bring the youth and other members of the community together to learn;
- to be able to close the gap of knowledge and skills in achieving community development;
- to learn and spread the information learned to family and friends.

5.1.2. The need for group learning.

The need for establishing community groups was overwhelmingly clear. Participants regarded community groups as powerful places for learning and sharing village experiences and issues. For instance, one extension worker pointed out:

the idea of community learning groups is relevant in bringing women, youth, and other members of the communities together to learn. This will be the very first step towards closing the gap in our development.

Another member of a women's group also expressed in a similar way:

There is an extreme need for those kinds of groups in our communities. There is a great need for coming together to share ideas and to learn from one another. Learning groups are important because they are places where you can easily invite experts to come and share views and ideas on important issues. What women acquire from the groups they can easily transfer to friends and family members.

One of a pilot group member also expressed the following:

It is sometimes very important to learn from one another and to share ideas. For instances, some men in the community do not know how to make the most of the traditional instruments. Thus, in such a men's group, not only women, but men can share and learn from one another.

One member in another pilot group also said, referring to the activities done for the ten day meeting, that:

Group learning as the one we did is very significant. Sometimes you do not have the answers to some of the problems, but someone in the group can give you the answer.

Where activities answered individual needs and interests, this determined the degree of participants' involvement in those activities. Where the outcome of activities related to social practices, this led to satisfaction, application, and the satisfactory use of those skills. It was discovered that topics and activities identified by the participants themselves created self motivation and increased interest to accomplish the intended goal. Learners had a sense of ownership of the program because they felt it was their own ideas which were being developed.

From the groups I worked with, I learned that community groups, especially those who already knew how to read and write, no longer wanted learning for its own sake. They preferred involving themselves in a kind of a project or learning where the end product could provide them with financial support for them and their families. They wanted to involve themselves in learning and doing. While doing things for their own survival, they

learned a language or other issues. For instance one member expressed that: " I want to learn sewing, cooking, etc..., in English." I understood that she wanted both; sewing and communication at the same time. The problem was how to plan to incorporate a variety of activities in a group in order to gain a variety of skills and information.

The problem of poverty in most of our rural communities has created other unique needs. Learning with this regard was seen from different perspectives. Learning was always attached to most of the adult learners' basic fundamental needs of economic survival and support. Thus, the provision of facilities and equipment, as well as materials for assistance in learning and fulfilling some of these basic needs, would contribute towards the motivation for continuous learning.

5.1.3. The Activities.

Most of the community groups to which I had access were for socialization, women sharing skills and knowledge with others. Some were for community improvement activities, and for community education, while others were involved in family issues and problems such as child raising, conflicts and marriages, and alcohol abuse. Activities such as discussions, sharing, as well as dramas and role plays to demonstrate the problem of AIDS and teenage pregnancy were used. I failed to see literacy activities being used in the process of the group activities. The use of reading and writing were not part of the total activities. The only member who seemed to do the writing was the secretary of the group.

But there was a need for some groups to incorporate literacy into their activities. One member of the women's sewing group expressed that they were experiencing communication problems and that they wanted to get involved in literacy for basic English.

They also explained that they already started looking for a tutor who would be trained to come and teach them basic English.

With the pilot groups, after dealing with the role of a group leader, they were also encouraged to incorporate some of these principles, for instance, the principle of equality: For the group leader and members to allow the power to be in the hands of the membership. Everyone could feel recognized. The principle of cooperation. To let the spirit of cooperation and companionship reign. For each member to be able to help and not to compete with each other.

The principle of continuity and planning. The studies have to be organized and planned. Also the ability of the group to maintain an interest in further learning.

The principle of active participation. If members are not actively involve, there will be no cooperation, no learning. Participants were encouraged to participate.

The principle of printed study material as a supplement to the members experiences.

Groups were supplied with poems and short story booklets taken from the formal education school.

The different context, resources available, and expertise also contributed to the choices of topics. But some groups felt totally stranded. They felt they needed to do something but they didn't know what activity and how. Other community members interviewed also expressed that some groups had the tendency of doing or imitating what other groups were doing. They go for what they hear and saw as successful activities and not really what they needed to solve their immediate problem.

Activities in this sense were part of learning experiences; teaching strategies; information sharing; entertainment and communication. Reasons for the activities were the

expression of feelings, reality, social problems and desires, as well as for community learning, teaching and sharing.

5.1.4. The Factors that Hinder CLGs Were Both Inside and Outside the Groups:

Inside the groups.

Groups lacked “group learning” skills. Some group members found it very difficult to work with quiet and slow partners. They ended up doing tasks alone. One member of the pilot group said that “most people in the community do not know how to work together in groups....” From their informal discussions one could also hear some members complaining about those who cannot speak up. They were complaining that some people did all the talking and writing while others were only listening. It was very interesting to see that tasks were also distributed according to abilities. Everybody was not able to do everything. Especially with reference to slower readers and quiet members of the group. For instance, one member of a pilot group complained: “I do not know what other people are doing? They are just sitting and listening” .

Groups experienced conflicts and discouragement's: There were members who complained about competent or incompetent members in group activities and these brought some conflicts and discouragement. Instead of helping to solve problems some members stayed away from the group and never came back.

With the other community groups, it was also observed and expressed that cooperation and member negative attitudes were also some of the factors that hinder inside the groups. Group leaders complained much about absenteeism, and of not being committed, other members confronted their leaders for not being able to lead the group successfully.

Some groups lack leadership skills. Through my observation as well as from the interviews, leadership was one of the major problems that hindered in the groups. Members complained about leaders who were not committed. There were formal and informal leadership inside the groups. Members also stated that there was a lack of leadership in their communities:

There is a lack of leadership in the community. People are always talking about important issues that need to be looked into or problems that need to be solved in the community, but nobody is ready to take the lead.

Some people in the community know that learning in groups is important and they are always talking about it but none is able to start.

In some of the groups I discovered that there were informal leaders consisted of male in a predominantly female group as well as female with advanced skills, in predominantly low literacy group. In some instances, some group members took the lead

because the issues or content of the topic under discussion was more familiar to them than to the other members. When the issues arose out of topics of with the tradition, older members took the lead. When the topic was more about current issues, young members took the lead.

Low level of Literacy Competency. I also observed that the level of literacy competency among the group members in reading and writing was not satisfactory. It might be due to one of the following reasons: a) the fact that the skills were never used by the participants, and it did not relate to their daily practices, b) the participants had not satisfactorily gained the skills of reading and writing in their literacy training.

Some of the members in groups found it very difficult to write and to read information. These persons were using other members to do their writing at home. Some were even refusing to read what they wrote. They felt a bit uncomfortable and it took them time to complete tasks. These were not the major concern of the research. But during the course of the research it became a concern. For instance, there were some activities that required literacy competency. Most members involved in the pilot groups completed their stages two and three of the National Literacy Program. Thus, the success and failure of literacy training observed in community learning groups made it possible for me to connect it to the National Literacy Program.

Guidance and support. Groups and members expressed that community learning groups needed much guidance and support in a way of reading materials, training in skills and information about projects. Some also felt that the community at large was not supportive at all. They relied, sometimes heavily, on local support and resources, for instance membership fees. A member of a women's group expressed on behalf of the

group that: " ..we need funds to pay for transport and other expenses....., but sometimes we use local resources when performing traditional dances and dramas....." There was also a strong need for support in basic funds, basic skills, and basic facilities. It was revealed in some interviews that some groups needed more support than others. For instance, the following observations were made by the group members:

...to sustain a group one needs some financial assistance from the community members, NGOs, and government when approached. There is also a need for support in training in skills and knowledge to start projects of interests...

...Supporters sometimes look at what those groups are doing. If the groups are doing activities supporting community development whereby others and self can benefit, those groups can easily be supported
Support can be provided in the form of skills, and knowledge through training and workshops, or financial where needed, even transportation...

Outside of the groups .

Outside the group were the communities' negative attitudes towards learning. I learned that these kinds of attitudes were caused by a lack of understanding the concept of learning. What some people viewed as learning were those activities that provide immediate benefit or reward. For instance, the following quotations were from the members of the different groups. One member of the youth group said:

There are people outside the group in the communities who are always discouraging the members of the group.....they refer to the members of the drama group as stupid not knowing what to do but playing drama , people in our communities like to join groups that can provide them with financial assistance. They don't want groups working for nothing.

One Community member said:

Most people in the communities do not want to wait for the final outcome. They want their needs to be satisfied immediately. ...At the beginning of some activities, people are so motivated,...for instance, in agriculture, when crops are dying for some reason, they get discouraged and drop out. When things start community going well they rush and join the group again, said one member of a pilot group.

One community member in an interview also expressed:

Most people do not know how to work together in groups. Some members of the family, men or women, are not comfortable to leave their partners to go and stay in groups every time and to leave home responsibilities unattended. It brings arguments and conflicts.

There were also some discouragement's with regard to age. Some members tried to stop others from attending groups because they were too old. One member of the pilot group said that there were some people who use to say "You are very old, what do you want to learn and for what." There were some discouragement's outside the groups that sometimes prevented the formation of learning groups. In some cases discouragement's break up some of the already established groups.

5.1.5. Sustainability:

When I wanted to know the reasons for sustaining the groups, I came to the following conclusion, supported by some comments from the group members. To sustain the group, members need 1) a feeling of belonging, and identity; 2) applicable and informative activities to create a feeling of personal growth as well as personal and group accomplishment. For instance, one member of a women's group expressed:

"We do not have a problem, as a Church women's group, members were always very much committed."

Also a member of another women group expressed:

...I was shy...after joining the group I became more talkative and active then ever...every time you come there is something new to learn and to share...I learned a lot and I even taught some of the skills learned to my family and friends at home.

The content should be informative in the sense that one can take the information and apply it back home, or share it with friends and family.

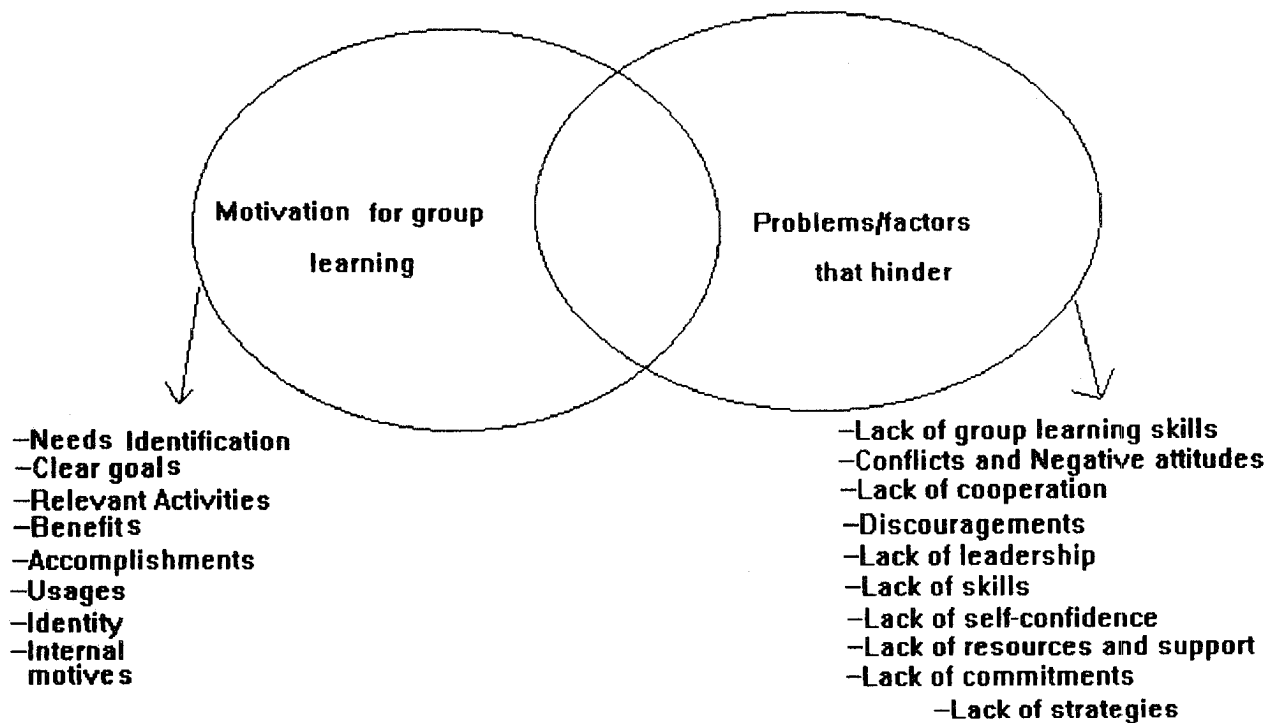
Some of the factors that motivated the members to come were the usage's of the information and skills learned. Most participants appreciated specific information that they could immediately apply, feeling a need for information that may help them to perform tasks, improve on task or information to help them to solve their problems.

In one Women' Group, there were some demonstrations and learning on how to perform certain tasks to improve your clothing, and personality. In another Women's Group, there were discussions on family issues and conflicts and how to go about solving those conflicts to improve relationships. In the Health group, members expressed that their motivation was the fact that the content learned came from them. For instance: "The program is important in the sense that it is not a structured class, since it goes its own pace, we talked about the topics we want to discuss."

Also:

Because it is not just learning about certain specific things like the regular class or high school and stuff where you have to learn this and this and this. Here is that we want to talk about the things we want to talk about, and at the length we want to talk about it. And a lot of it is the worries and *fears* and things this particular group is always dealing with outside and not just here. It is not just academic stuff.

Not all members are attracted by such issues. Some were motivated by the pleasure, socialization, and a positive feeling about the activities in the group. Being away from home responsibilities and spending hours with friends were some of the motivations.



5.2. Figure 2. Two Main Themes From the Study

Motivation for group learning , and problems that hinder in group learning came out clearly as the two main themes in the study.

5.2.1. Motivation.

Motivation on one hand, was brought about by:

- a clear need for coming together,
- a clear goal of what was going to happen in the groups,
- relevant activities that were undertaken by the groups,
- a feeling that one was benefiting or accomplishing skills from the activities,
- a sense that the skills learned in groups were useful in daily practices, and
- a feeling of identity, when members felt that they were part of the group.

5.2.2. Problems.

Problems on the other hand, were brought by:

- a lack of group learning skills, how to treat one another and to build a team,
- discouragement, and negative attitude inside and outside the groups,
- lack of cooperation, and conflict among members of the groups,
- lack of leadership to bring and keep the group together,
- lack of skills and confidence,
- lack of commitment to perform tasks and in order to maintain the group,
- lack of strategies to try different ways to reach a certain objective, and
- lack of resources and support to manage the groups.

Motivation seem to be an independent factor in group learning. Group members who were highly motivated can achieved many thing regardless of the problems. They could overcome problems through motivation. The issue here is nor reducing the problems in order to increase motivation, not even the other way round. A decrease in motivation does not necessarily means an increase in the problems mentioned. For instance, in the absence of many of the problems mentioned, a group that does not have an agenda, whose needs were not met by the activities undertaken, and whose members do not benefit from the group, will not sustain itself.

Sustainability should only be achieved, as it was revealed from the study, through:

- ⇒ an increase of those factors that motivated the group members for coming and being together, and
- ⇒ an increase in those skills that will help the participants to overcome the problems.

Motivation can be increased by the use of social practices and common events to learn, the use of non-authoritarian and self-govern approaches to learning, the provision of guidance in needs identification and clear goal setting, and introduction of skill building activities to enhance internal motivation, such as courage, confidence, trust, hope and commitment.

Increased skills that will help decreased the problem of sustainability include:

- the provision of planning skills in planning group activities, and
- introducing group learning skills to participant groups that will reduce conflicts and cooperation,

- the provision of leadership skills that will help leaders to manage the group and to mobilize to reduce discouragement's and negative attitudes,
- the provision of guidance that will help the group to establish links as well as how and where to get resources and support.

5.3. Community Learning and Development Centres.

The idea of the establishment of Community Learning and Development Centres, slowly being introduced by the government, links well with community learning groups. It would be necessary to create space for the community members where they could come to learn. The idea would also, in the long run, help the people to develop a culture of reading and writing in particular as well as the promotion of lifelong learning in general. A learning culture needs to be strengthened in most of the communities. One important aspect to be considered in this regard should be the incorporation of consciousness raising and mobilization for learning within community group learning activities.

During my interviews and from my observation and discussions with the different groups and group leaders, it was discovered that forming and sustaining groups was becoming difficult. One community member expressed that: "People in the communities are moving from group activities towards individual activities for self enrichment." (individualization). Thus, the development of Centres and the promotion of Community Group Learning should be to enhance social interaction and collective development.

The Community Learning and Development Centres, if realized, will have to address some of these problems. At the community centers, 1) community members would

benefit from all the activities and support at the same time and at the same place; 2) programs can easily be coordinated and integrated to suit the busy time table of those adult learners involved; and 3) the different organizations will also benefit from the fact that groups could easily be found, utilized, and supported when necessary.

5.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Health Group was more systematic and focused in a certain way. They were able to identify their goal/problem at the very beginning of their meetings. In the process, they were able to explore their identified topics one by one. They even tried to apply what they learned from the activities to their daily practices. For instance, the growing of herbal medicine, the change in the way they spice their food, etc.,. The success of the Health Group can be related to the degree of guidance and facilitation from the facilitator.

The case was the same with the pilot groups. The members of the pilot groups were very happy and proud. They felt they succeeded in their activities. For instance, the Vungu Vungu pilot group discussed the history of the traditional leaders as well as the abuse of alcohol by women today. They started by identifying appropriate topics. Secondly, they planned how to go about discussing these topics. There were a lot of things that they needed to look at before starting addressing these two topics. At the end of the day, they had plenty of information at hand which they did not expect.

The Katjie na Katjie group did a kind of a strategic planning for an agriculture project. It was very fun. They identified their need, followed by a well designed plan. Thus, at the end of the day they were very much proud of the process and the outcome. One might also conclude that the success in both pilot groups and the Health group was brought about by my facilitation in one way or another. The two community groups, on the other hands were two independent groups. Their activities were also well organized, but they needed some guidelines and supported skills.

Generally groups sometimes, need guided facilitation. They needed trained facilitators, or leaders not only in andragogical skills, adult learning and teaching skills, but also in moral issues, group learning skills, organization, management, and how to facilitate, lead the group, and group discussions.

SECTION 6

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

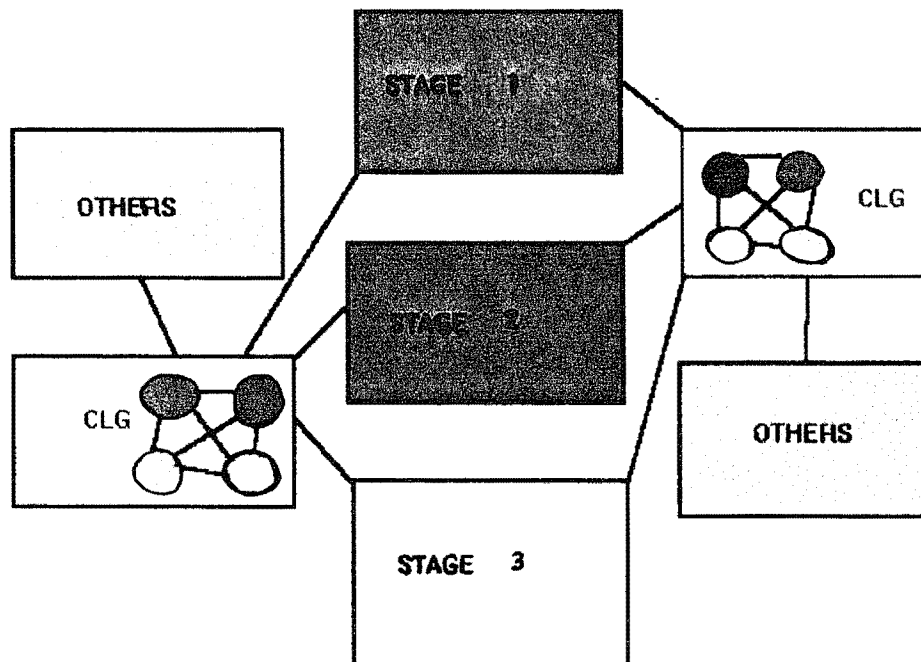
6.1. A review Of the Functional Literacy Materials.

I suggest that there should be a review of functional material and methodology for the stage two of the National Literacy Program in Namibia. The stage two material should be a continuation of stage one, meaning that the materials should consist of a lot of reading and writing exercises. The lessons for the stage two material, which is the functional stage, should be practical rather than theoretical. Participants should be encouraged to generate local reading materials where possible. More important, in these materials, the lessons should be drawn from the learners, daily life experiences especially issues affecting their daily lives.

6.2. The Proposed Model For Community Learning Groups.

From the field experience I can define a learning group as a group that provides opportunities for sharing, discussing, and learning from one another about both education

and community problems and issues. This method could create space for adult learners and community members to share and learn from, about, and with one another.



6.2.1. Figure 3. CLG as a Supplement to the Already existing Structure(NLPN)

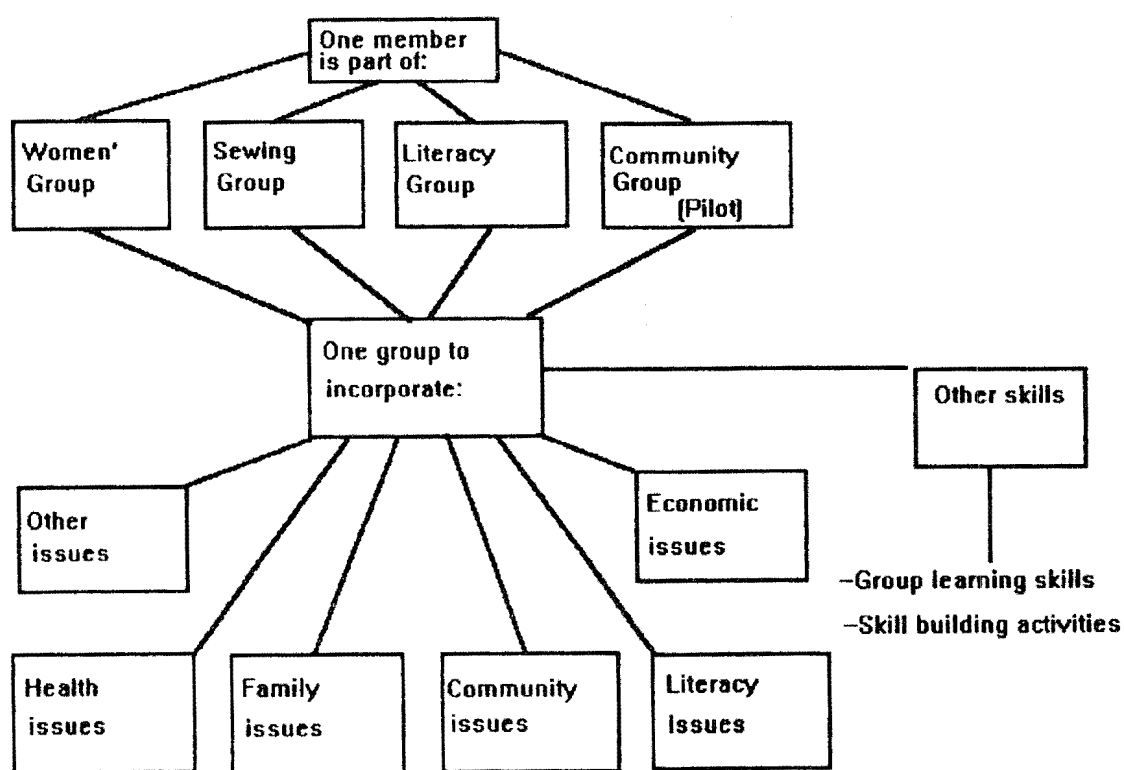
CLG could be seen as an complementary tool/method for community learning. From field experiences, it is apparent that literacy is not a necessary prerequisite for participating in and developing skills and social awareness within CLG. One could definitely start with a CLG and in the process develop a motivation for literacy or vice versa. Literacy may be a need, but not always a starting point in community participation.

Literacy proceeds from the learner, and the impetus for it has its origin in a diversity of sources in which the situation of the learners, individual or social groups, have a profound influence. In the ultimate analysis, the 'literacy need' arises in the individual or social group with a realization, however inarticulated or even inchoate, of a sense disharmony or incompleteness in its particular social 'universe' of relations, meanings and interpretations. As the individual or group becomes consciously aware of the disharmony and its own closed 'universe', the literacy process as a reaching out to new meanings and interpretations begins, transforming the individual/group into learners. (Roy-Singh, 1990, p. 13)

In Freirean terms, the literacy process also relates to speaking the word to transforming the world. The learner becomes aware of the 'necessity' to learn to read and write thus to enable him/her to enter a wider field of participation and sharing.

The needs of adult learners, as experienced during the research, were vast and complicated. Some members of the community belong to many different groups. Their time-tables were fully occupied throughout the week. The five members of one pilot group I worked with were also involved with three other different groups; they were: full members of the Women's Sewing Group; members of the stage three (Basic English) of the National Literacy Program; and members of the Women's Church Group. This was a result of wanting to satisfy all their needs at the same time.

But when one looks at the activities in all the groups these individuals were involved in, one can see that the activities in these different groups could be combined and integrated within a single group. This phenomenon made me to think of the following Models:



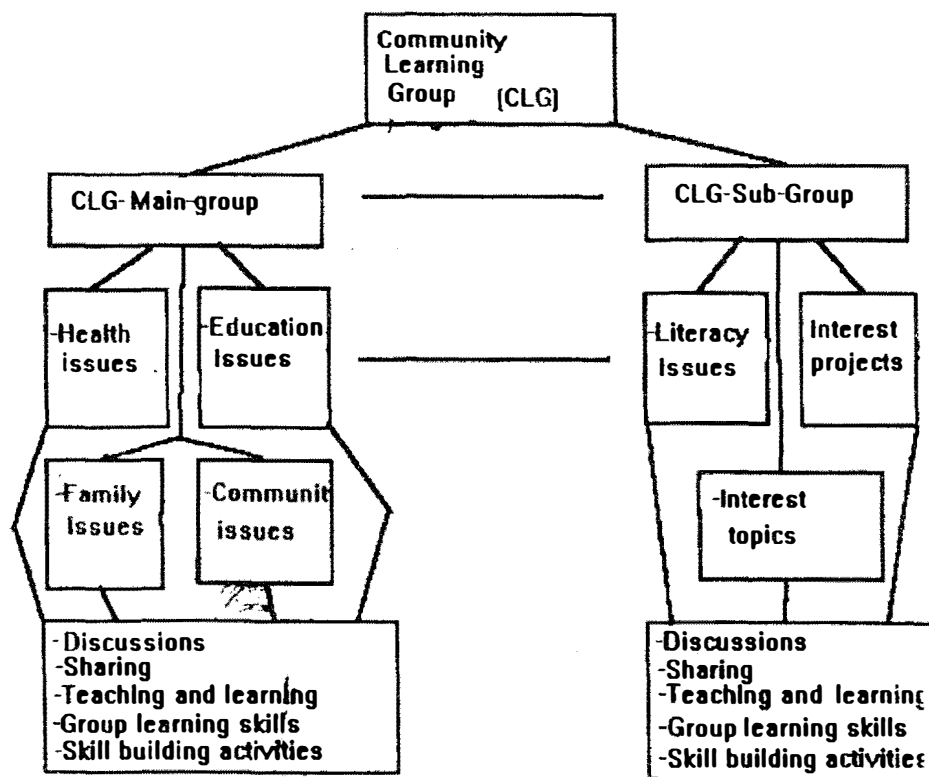
6.2.2. Figure 4. How a single group can plan to incorporate a variety of activities.

The Women's Sewing Group, for instance, can plan a variety of activities at the same place in order to gain sewing skills; communication skills; improved reading writing skills; gaining information on health related issues as well as other community related information.

The sewing group members could plan to do the following:

1. It is suggested that the sewing group members could select a person among them or from the community who would give them lessons in basic English for improving their communication, while working on the project.
2. They may use project concepts to learn English. They could do a lot of exercises while doing their sewing projects.
3. They may incorporate reading, writing, and speaking exercises by doing the following:
 - a) document their activities for future use and references. Each end of the year produce a document of their activities. By doing so, each member will be required to write something at the end of the day as a contribution to the document.
 - b) write about the project, about themselves as members of the projects or about their family and friends.
 - c) share their experiences, verbally, with other members. They may also share their benefit in working with the group.
4. The information on health, family and community issues or any other issues of interests could be obtained by doing the following:

- a). extend invitation to the different organizations to come and address those issues.
- b). visit clinics, and other places of interest to find out about the information needed, on scheduled times.
- c). Members with different expertise could be identified inside the groups and in the community, that can be shared with the group.



6.2.3. Figure 5. A way of planning to accommodate and support different individuals and sub-group needs within the main group.

Another example could be a Community Learning Group with subgroups. (See figure 5) Within the main Learning Group, there might be small sub-groups involved in other activities at different times. For instances, in the main group, participants will be interested in issues and problems that are affecting the community as a whole. Issues and topics such as alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, health related issues, water pumps, agricultural skills, and other skills are some of those problems. Activities will include discussions, and sharing on how to find strategies for solving problems and how to find support for sustaining the group and activities.

The sub-groups will be those small groups that might emerge out of the main community group that might need specialized skills, for instance in sewing, literacy, etc. These sub-groups may prefer to engage in specific learning activities for literacy attainment, and other general knowledge on specific interest topics.

Activities for these sub-groups could be organized in the main community group or in the specific sub-groups. The main group committee or leaders will make contacts and arrangements for support with NGOs, government, private sectors, or any community support, training, visits, etc., for the main and sub-groups needs.

The activities and processes in both models would be determined by the particular group in a particular context. The group members start with the analysis as to who they are, moving towards the questions of what they want to learn, what particular learning activities would be feasible for them as well as the availability of resources

6.2.4. Support and resources needed

The community members may form community groups from their own initiatives. But, in some cases, there is still a serious need for consciousness raising for people to be able to identify their critical issues themselves. In such cases groups need to be initiated by the adult educators, and by critically helping them to identify and name their problems and to try to solve those problems themselves. This will be the first important step in supporting and promoting group learning that in turn might help people to manage their own life and their own environment.

If group learning is to be promoted, it does not only mean bringing people together, providing them with materials and helping them to continue, it means a process that requires planning and guidance and it is a long process.

After planning the process, a guide for group learning should be designed to provide general guidelines for activities. Facilitators should be identified and trained to initiate the process and to be able to lead the first meetings. Some groups from the research experience needed support in need and problem identification. One community worker expressed that:

some group members identified needs that are not theirs. They just heard that such activities or projects had been a success in the next village, or because support is always being granted to those who are doing those projects or activities, when asked what their needs were, then they identify the same.

Learning places, as initiated by the government, could be required by the establishment of Community Development Centres where possible. But, in most cases, centres might not be realized due to the fact that some communities are more isolated and suitable buildings are rare. The community members should utilize available community halls, clinics, etc., as places for their meetings.

Community groups would utilize community facilities where available. Communities should make use of local expertise and skills. On the other hand, the government will be requested to train members from the community groups at those community centers and those trained members in turn to go back to their community groups to teach and train group members the skills they have learned. That will be also a vital contribution from the government in support of the groups.

6.2.5. Group identity

The Community Learning Group is an excellent conduit for adult literacy. The groups will differ from one to the other in objectives, content, and activities; more important, groups will be formed in different contexts, cultural, gender, language, age, background, etc. The identity of each group will be based on the Who?, What? and Why?. Who will be the participants?, What are their needs and interests? and Why are they together? What do they want to accomplish? By answering these questions one will be able to know the identity of each group.

The groups will be involved in different activities but it will also be a vital contribution to introduce a diverse set of skills including: group learning skills, literacy skills, and communication skills, as well as interrelation and social skills inside the group, for the group members. Learners will be encouraged to generate their own materials while in the process of their daily activities, in the form of booklets and newsletters, if possible. As time goes on, learners will be able to initiate income-generating activities and work on other projects, depending on the resource commitments within each group. It is not impossible but it will depend on guidance how much the group members be able to maintain the characteristics of group learning, such as companionship, community of work, self-activity by all, and mutual help in solving problems.

6.3. New Directions.

I would also like to suggest new directions that are to be considered by the groups. I felt that **a)** new types of organizations and consultations should be developed in groups to encourage and facilitate the formation of autonomous groups of all ages. It has been and still is a concern that men are rare in the learning places. Even men learning groups are nowhere to be found, only women and a few youth groups.

Another new direction is the concern of **b)** the content and activities within the existing groups; to include skills such as leadership, social, and communication skills in group learning; to include activities for building skills in self-esteem and confidence among members. It is also important for groups to develop skills in planning, setting goals, and organization.

Groups should have **c)** a clear structure of praxis. To be able to reflect and act upon the things they are talking about. Most of the issues discussed in groups observed are not carefully defined and examined. For instance, the following remark was made by one community development extension worker:

Some Women's Groups are functioning well in general, but they seem to waste resources, in terms of money, transport, and time. They are failing to address relevant issues in the communities. The resources are not well spent for community development or assistance. Money is used for the same thing year in and year out and there is no change in their structures and other development issues.

6.4. Political will.

Government support is required to develop interest and to provide support to group learning. The government would not be necessarily the one to run the groups. But it would be expected from the government to provide necessary support, awareness and a serious mobilization for learning. The Government may also play a major role by conducting research to investigate future success and failure of the groups for improvement.. To further strengthen its collaboration with the Nongovernmental Organizations in support and development of community groups.

6.5. To develop a guide for use by the groups.

One of my recommendations would be the development of a Participants' Group Learning Skills and Activities Guide. The group learning skill section should consist of a range of skills that are needed in group learning situations. These may include: Leadership skills, planning skills, communication skills, social skills, personal relations skills, etc. The group activity section should include activities for skill building that are beneficial for group members to enhance self-esteem, confidence, etc.. The guide or handbook will be utilized as part of the learning group activities and to help them in planning their activities.

I also felt that the process for designing the participant guide should be more participatory. A committee should be formed to be involved in the design of this guide. The committee should consist of members from the facilitators or group leaders, as well as from the participants themselves. This should be done to include vital views and experiences from those who will be the direct users of these materials. I felt strongly that learning groups, need to be exposed to learning skills to be able to create a friendly, safe, and risk-free learning atmosphere, etc. I believe that these should be the issues to be considered for the foundation of learning groups and a vital contribution.

CONCLUSION

It is true that CLGs can be created, guided, and supported. The pilot groups were created to work on topics of interests from which actions and changes were observed. Community groups, on the other hand, were independent, self- organized groups that were observed and interviewed to established actions and changes for the development of both participants and communities.

Most respondents in both groups see community groups as a potentially powerful place for learning and sharing village experiences and issues. Most group participants felt that group learning was a source of information and an agent of change. They even talked of benefits, and expressed that there was a great need for creating groups and being part of those groups. One member of a women's group explained:

Our women's group brought a lot of changes among the members. Many families that were in crisis, couples that wanted to separate, and alcohol abusers who used to insult each other, changed.

One member in the health group also expressed:

I mean I should have walked out of here with something I have never tried. I would never have tried to grow my own Herbal. I would have never tried to do stress management on my own.

A summary of my discussion with one extension worker about the benefit of group learning is as follows: He started by expressing that there were a lot of benefits in learning in groups. The people gained a lot of knowledge through interaction. They were able to help each other, e.g., sharing ideas as they were interacting with one another. He pointed out clearly that there were many things that one could not accomplished as an individual. By working in groups people learned how to work in groups and to be friendly, helpful, and cooperative with one another. People could gain knowledge to help them participate in any other development meetings and activities.

He expressed that help and support from organizations as well as individuals and government could easily be obtained as a group. Such groups could also be used by different organizations and companies for other different purposes. He concluded that there will be much financial and resource support coming into the country and communities, but the support could not easily be granted to individuals. Most of these supporters were looking toward groups. The idea of community groups in this regard can bring more assistance to different communities. The need for establishing community learning groups was extremely overwhelming, despite the fact that there were some negative influences in community group learning.

The ideas from the study will answer questions to help to strengthen the already existing groups within the NLPN, and if community development Centers are to be realized, the idea from the study will also be utilized to help strengthen groups and activities at these centers.

Generally, the study results will also help in support for the existing community groups as well as those members of the communities who might want to start forming groups, on their own, in their respective communities.

It is also important to note that the study explored learning groups that were similar in some ways to other learning groups serving the same purposes. The case studies about these groups should produce knowledge relevant to the understanding of such groups in general.

APPENDIXES

A. LEADING QUESTIONS ON PILOT GROUPS AND COMMUNITY LEARNING GROUPS.

1. What did they do in the community to learn together?
2. What did they thought Community Learning Groups all about?
3. What were the purposes of a Community Learning Group?
4. Did they saw any need for establishing and promotion of Community Learning Groups in their communities?
5. Why do they thought Community Learning Groups were important?
6. What were the major topics undertaken in a Community Learning Group?
7. Why such topics?
8. What were the activities undertaken in Community Learning Groups to explore the selected topics?
9. Why such activities?
10. What methods were used in Community Learning Groups in order to accomplish the intended objectives?
11. What resources and support were available to sustain a Community Learning Group?
12. What are the major problems or factors that hinder in Community Learning Groups?

B. OBSERVATION SHEET

1. How were the members in groups socialized and communicated with one another?

2. What were the formal and informal leadership in the group?, and Why?

3. How were the tasks being distributed among the group members?

4. what were other methods used to accomplish tasks?

5. What were the problems and constraints experienced by the members while working in groups?

6. How the problems were solved in groups?

7. How the decisions were made?

8. How different opinions from members were accommodated?

9. What were the impact of the learning situation upon the members? (for the pilot groups only)

a) Changes observed among the members that took place at the beginning and at the end of their pilot group activities.

b) What were the group members talking to one another about the new learning environment?

C. A CONTENT PAGE FROM THE PILOT GROUPS' ACTIVITY BOOKLET.

CONTENT

	PAGE
1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION	2
2. NAME LIST OF PARTICIPANTS	2

SECTION 1

3. VUNGU VUNGU PILOT GROUP ACTIVITIES

<u>3.1. Introduction: Why Literacy</u>	5
a). Benefits from Literacy	6
b). Government Support	8
c). Future Literacy Activities	9
<u>3.2. Traditional Issues</u>	
a). Traditional Ways in Respect For Traditional Chiefs	10
b). Traditional Child Raising	13
c). Alcohol Abuse by Women	16

SECTION 2

4. KATJI NA KATJI PILOT GROUP ACTIVITIES

<u>4.1 How to start a Project</u>	
a) What problem do we have?	19
b) What kind of project do we need?	19
c) Why such a project?	20
d) Planning	
i) What do we have to start with?	20
ii) What kind of support do we need?	21
iii) Where to get the support?	21
iv) What are the benefits from the project?	22
v) What are the factors and constraints?	23
vi) Other logistics	24

D. LIST AND ADDRESSES OF PARTICIPANT AND PARTICIPANT GROUPS

Vungu Vungu Pilot Group
Seventeen, 1995 Stage Three Basic English Class
Sarusungu Village
Rundu

Katji na Katji Pilot Group
Seven Community Member Volunteers
Katji na Katji Village
Rundu

Two Members of the Kambundu Women's Group
Tutungeni & Nkarapamwe
Rundu

Two Members of the Women's Club
Tutungeni
Rundu

Two Members of the Lutheran Church Women's Group
Nkarapamwe
Rundu

Three Members of the CADRAG Youth Group
Safari
Rundu

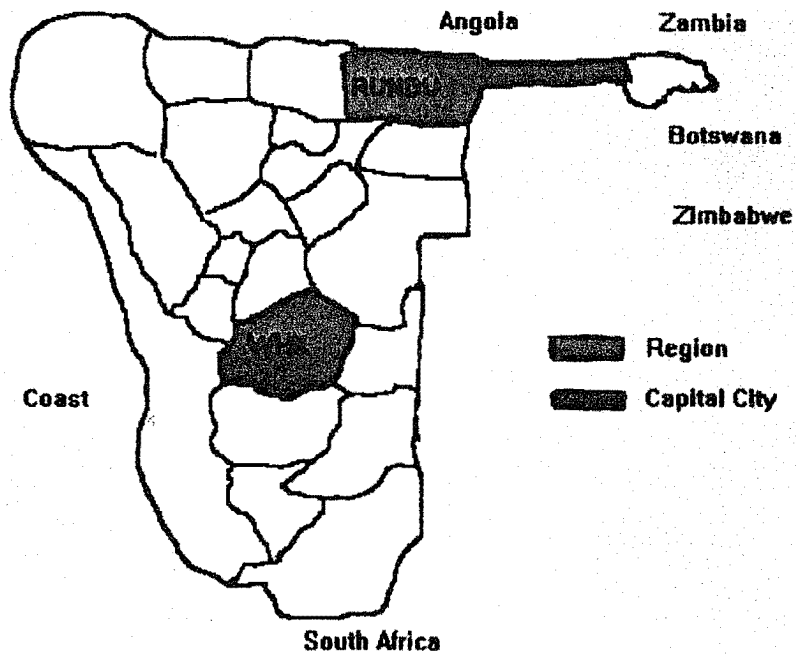
Two Members of the Kauvi Sewing Group
Nkarapamwe
Rundu

Two Members of the CANAMCO Project
Donker Hoek
Rundu

A Member from the Community Development Office
Rundu Regional Office
Rundu

A Member from the Agriculture Extension Office
Rundu Regional Office
Rundu

E. A MAP THAT SHOWS THE LOCATION WHERE THE STUDY WAS CONDUCTED



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